REMARKS

Claims 1-43, and 45 are pending. Claims 1-4, 7-12, 14-17, 19-21, 23, 25, 30, 33, 39, and 41-43 have been amended. No new matter has been added by way of this amendment. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-45 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,710,887 (hereinafter "*Chelliah*") in view of "Frequently Asked Questions: Basic Information About MUDs and MUDding", Jennifer Smith and Andrew Cowan, 1996-1999 (hereinafter "Smith/Cowan". Applicants have carefully considered the Examiner's arguments with respect to the aforementioned combination and has amended the claims to overcome the alleged obviousness rejection. Accordingly, for the following reasons, applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent claims 1, 17, 33, and 39 have been amended to reflect that the character icon is animatable on the users computer. Support for this amendment may be found on page 4, line 22, and page 28, line 16 of the specification.

The present invention, as now recited in amended independent claims 1, 17, 33, and 39, provides a system and method for directing network users to specific web sites for providing incentives to users in an entertaining and/educational format to encourage such users to visit third party or "target" web sites. This is generally accomplished by assigning a system user with a symbol or animatable character icon which will be visible to a user on an interface device, such as a computer, mobile phone or other Internet accessible device. Through the interface device the user can access target web sites of subscriber advertisers connected to the Internet via an advertiser server (e.g. target web site addresses) where the user can obtain enhancement content that may pertain or relate to features, characteristics or attributes of an animatable character icon displayed on

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the user interface device. Thus, character icon functionality and attributes may be acquired by visiting various enhancement content-providing target web sites.

Chelliah describes a system and method which facilities commercial transactions between a plurality of customers and one or more suppliers of goods. A main aspect of *Chelliah* is to extend to e-commerce applications, with little modification, existing commercial subsystems used for physical (e.g. traditional) commerce. See, *Chelliah* Col. 2, lines 43-55. Thus, *Chelliah* provides a system and method for "e-commerce" which closely replicates commercial transactions in everyday life (Col. 2, lines 65-67). Thus, the focus of the *Chelliah* system and method is to provide an electronic commerce platform that closely resembles traditional physical commerce techniques so that customers (e.g. purchasers, users, etc.), will not be intimidated by electronic commerce and will, therefore, be more inclined to participate in e-commerce transactions. This is accomplished via communication between a system user via, for example, a PC, and a goods supplier via a supplier server. The supplier server provides the user with information concerning the supplier goods, such as in the form of an e-catalog rendered on the user's PC. Based on inquires and/or selections made by the user, pricing and discount information as well as overall product information is accessed by the supplier server and conveyed to the user's PC. The user's purchase history and payment preferences are maintained in a "customer monitoring object" accessed by the supplier server. If a purchase is made, shipping information is provided by the supplier server to a shipping facility. (See, Col. 3, lines 18-65). *Chelliah* fails to teach the use and display of animatable character icons on a user's computer or other terminal device, as now required in amended independent claims 1, 17, 33, and 39.

Set forth on page 3, paragraph 7 thru page 4 paragraph 9 of the Office Action is the statement that:

Chelliah does not specifically teach the use of character icons with enhancement (and enhancement authorization) capabilities wherein the communication of a command effectuates a function on the user interface device pertaining to the character icon.

Smith and Cowan teach a MUD (Multiple User Dimension/Duneon/Dialogue) which is a computer program that allows a user to take control of a computerized character capable of walking, chatting, exploring, solving puzzles and creating rooms, descriptions and items, (§ 1.1). Some MUDs require registration wherein a user must obtain a character for a MUD administrator, (§1.3), and others allow a user to create their own character, (§1.7), wherein moving and interacting with other characters is done through common commands, (§1.14).

To combine the MUD environment and functionalities with the Chelliah computer system and method for electronic commerce would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention by Applicant. The motivation to combine, found within Chelliah, is the need to accommodate marketing activities necessary for customer generation within the e-commerce environment, (Col. 1, lines 63-67 and Col. 2, lines 1-3). Examiner notes that within some interactive Internet MUD environments, users are rewarded with "electronic monies" which allow users to purchase items, powers, etc. As a MUD environment allows for commercial functionalities, the incorporation of MUD characters into a system, (like Chelliah), which already teaches marketing-need-base e-commerce incentive programs, (coupon-based, frequent buyer, quantity discount and in-store), would have been obvious and as such is unpatentable. Thus, Claims 1, 17, 26-28, 33 and 39 are found to be unpatentable over the combined teachings of Chelliah in view of MUD-based functionalities, (as taught by Smith and Cowan).

Smith/Cowan has been cited to cure the deficiency of the *Chelliah* reference. With respect to the foregoing, however, the following is noted. Smith/Cowan provides nothing more than a general overview of a category of multiple-player computer games called "MUDs". As described therein, a MUD is a game wherein a player is assigned or can create a computerized persona or character that can be used to interact with other player characters by executing certain commands.

As cited in "Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia," (hereafter "*Wikipedia*"), which is presently available on the Internet at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MUD, a MUD is a multi-player computer role-playing game typically running on a bulletin board system or Internet server. Players assume

the role of a character, and see <u>textual descriptions</u> of rooms, objects, other characters, and computer-controlled creatures or non-player characters (NPCs) in a virtual world. They may interact with each other and the surroundings by <u>typing commands</u> that resemble plain English.

As further stated in the above definition, traditional MUDs implement a <u>fantasy world</u> populated by elves, goblins, and other mythical beings with players being knights, sorcerers, and the like. The object of the game is to slay monsters, explore a rich world and complete quests. Other MUDs have a science fiction setting. A copy of the MUD definition, which is available on the Internet at <u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MUD</u>, is attached herewith for the Examiners convenience.

Returning now to the Smith/Cowan reference, this "[reference only covers] the more traditional primarily text-based MUDS" (see §1.1). In short, the Smith/Cowan reference is directed to the type of fantasy game playing text based system that is discussed in *Wikipedia.*

Set forth throughout the Office Action is the statement that:

> Smith and Cowan teach a MUD-based character, with
> interactive *audio/visual* enhancement capabilities, whose
> incorporation into the Chelliah system and method would
> have been obvious. (Emphasis Added)

Applicants respectfully disagree. Although it is true that Smith/Cowan states, "Each user takes control of a computerized persona/avatar/incarnation/character. You can walk around, chat with other characters, explore dangerous monster-infested areas, solve puzzles, and create your very own rooms, descriptions and items (see §1.1)," all of this occurs in a <u>text-based</u> environment within the context of a fantasy world that is visualized within the mind of a user typing and responding to commands input to a computer via a standard keyboard. For example, §1.3 indicated where MUDS may be obtained, and provides specific locations of where "frequently updated [lists] of <u>text based</u> muds" are available. Section 1.6 of Smith/Cowan states that "if someone says (i.e., types) something while you're typing out a line, it will make a mess out of your line, making it hard to see

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what your typing and hard to keep track of what's going on in the mud." Further discussion of the text based system in Smith/Cowan is set forth in §1.7, listing what commands to type when initially accessing the mud; §1.14, listing common commands used in muds, such as typing *say, look, go,* and the like. In view of this, Applicants respectfully assert that Smith/Cowan fails to teach or suggest the audio/visual enhancement as stated by the Examiner, especially in the context of an "animatable" character, as now recited in the pending claims. Rather, the audio visual enhancement in the MUD disclosed in Smith/Cowan is based on the user typing a text command and reading a text response that was generated by another user of the system or by the mud itself.

In contrast, the invention is a system and method for directing network users to specific web sites for providing incentives to users in an entertaining and/educational format to encourage such users to visit third party or "target" web sites. This is generally accomplished by assigning a system user with an animatable character icon which will be visible to a user on an interface device, such as a computer, mobile phone or other Internet accessible device. This feature is now positively recited in the claims, wherein claim 1 includes the limitation "a user interface device for depicting an animatable character icon to the user;" claim 17 includes the step of "providing data in the form of an animatable character icon representation to the user interface device over said first network connection"; claim 33 includes the steps of "selecting an animatable character icon from a plurality of character icons; providing data to the user interface device in the form of an animatable character icon representation corresponding to the selected animatable character icon for display of the selected animatable character icon on the user interface device"; and claim 39 includes the steps of "determining whether the accessed content provider is offering access to an enhancement function corresponding to the presently-selected animatable character icon; and providing, to the user interface device, an ability to acquire access to an enhancement function if it is determined

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that the enhancement function offered by the content provider corresponds to the presently-selected *animatable* character icon."

The combination of *Chelliah* and *Smith/Cowan* fails to teach or suggest that a animatable character icon is displayed on a user's computer, as recited in amended independent claims 1, 17, 33 and 39. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

In view of the patentability of amended independent claims 1, 17, 33 and 39, for the reasons set forth above, dependent claims 2-16, 18-32, 34-43, and 45 are all patentable over the prior art.

Based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, this application is in condition for allowance. Early passage of this case to issue is respectfully requested. However, if there are any questions regarding this Response, or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this would expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,

COHEN, PONTANI, LIEBERMAN & PAVANE

By _____
Michael C. Stuart
Reg. No. 35,698
551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1210
New York, New York 10176
(212) 687-2770

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MUD

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

This article is about a type of online computer game. For other uses of the word "mud," see mud

In computer gaming, a **MUD** (multi-user dungeon, dimension, or sometimes domain) is a multi-player computer role-playing game typically running on a bulletin board system or Internet server. Players assume the role of a character, and see textual descriptions of rooms, objects, other characters, and computer-controlled creatures or non-player characters (NPCs) in a virtual world. They may interact with each other and the surroundings by typing commands that resemble plain English.

Traditional MUDs implement a fantasy world populated by elves, goblins, and other mythical beings with players being knights, sorcerers, and the like. The object of the game is to slay monsters, explore a rich world and complete quests. Other MUDs have a science fiction setting. Still others, especially those which are based on MOOs, are used in distance education or to allow for virtual conferences. MUDs have also attracted the interest of academic scholars from many fields, including communications, sociology, law, and synthetic economies.

Most MUDs are run as hobbies and are free to players; some may accept donations or allow players to "purchase" in-game items.

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History

The first MUDs appeared in 1978, and their popularity escalated in the USA during the 1980s, when (relatively speaking) cheap, home personal computers with 300 to 2400 baud modems enabled role players to log into multi-line BBSes. Roguelike games were also becoming popular at that time. In Europe at around the same time, MUD development was centered around academic networks, particularly at the University of Essex where they were played by many people, both internal and external to the University. In this context, it has been said that MUD stands for "Multi-Undergrad Destroyer" due to their popularity among college students, and the amount of time devoted to the MUD by the student.

The very first MUD was attributed to have been created and written by Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle at Essex University on a DEC PDP-10 in the UK [1] (*http://www.ludd.luth.se/mud/aber/mud-history.html*). They chose the acronym MUD to stand for Multi-User Dungeon, and was designed to be a multi-user version of another PDP-10 game called *Dungeon* (or *DUNGEN* due to the six character filename limit), which was later commercially released by Infocom under the original developement code name *Zork*. *Zork* in turn was inspired by an older text-adventure game known as *Colossal Cave Adventure* or *ADVENT*.

A version of MUD is still running at www.british-legends.com and a version of its descendant MUD2 runs at www.mud2.com or www.mudii.co.uk.

(The book "Dungeon Master" by William Dear, and some other sources suggest there were earlier MUD-type games that the Essex authors never knew about.)

These text-adventure games (both single and multi-player) drew inspiration from the paper-and-pencil based role-playing games (RPGs) such as *Dungeons & Dragons* which were approaching their peak popularity at this time, especially with the release of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (AD&D) in 1977.

This strong bond between RPGs and MUDs continued through the years with the release of dozens of AD&D modules and series of related books and stories (i.e. *Forgotten Realms* and *Dragonlance*). Influences also came from the gamebooks such as *Fighting Fantasy*, *Choose Your Own Adventure* and *Lone Wolf*, and also other RPGs such as *Vampire: The Masquerade*, and *Middle-earth Role Playing* (or *MERP*).

Other MUDs that appeared around 1985 included Mirrorworld, run by Pip Cordrey and developed and written by Tim Rogers, Lorenzo Wood and Nathaniel Billington, and SHADES, the world's first commercial MUD. This was accessible in the UK via the Prestel system. Mirrorworld was the first MUD to feature rolling resets.

Another popular MUD was AberMUD written in 1988 by Alan Cox, also known as Anarchy, named after the University of Wales Aberystwyth. Avalon, the Legend Lives, started in 1989, was the first MUD to combine a consistent fantasy story-line with a commercial venture.

In 1991, the release of DikuMUD (which was inspired by AberMUD) eventually lead to a virtual explosion of "hack-n-slash" MUDs based on this code and its derivatives.

Though seeing some decline in the past few years due to the advent of graphical MUDs, the MUD scene is still very much alive on the Internet, and can be accessed via standard telnet clients, or specialized MUD clients that give a more pleasant user experience.

MUD variants

Over time variants have diversified into other models while retaining the textual format, such as LPMuds, MUCKs, MUSHes, and MOOs.

A **MUSH** is often said to mean *multi-user shared habitat* (or, jocularly, *hallucination*). MUSHes descend from the program TinyMUD and date back to the early 1990s. They are more directly concerned with role-playing (acting) than MUDs, dispensing with the experience systems. Instead, players focus on creating their characters' lives as accurately as possible. Members of the MUSH family include PernMUSH, PennMUSH, TinyMUSH, TinyMUSE and TinyMUX.

A **MUCK** (*multi-user chat kingdom*) is similar to a MUSH in that the emphasis is on player interaction, rather than action and questing. MUCKs and MUSHes differ from IRC as a chat medium in that they provide a world, character descriptions etc in order to flesh out role-playing chat.

A **MUVE** is a fairly recent term which is the acronym of *multi-user virtual environment*. Its goal is to simply have a less narrow or ambiguous acronym for the genre.

Other variants emphasize building by providing players with a powerful programming language (as in MOOs) to make their own objects and rooms, or function as elaborate chat systems with no fantasy trappings.

When referring collectively to MUDs, MUCKs, MUSHes, and other similar models, the term MU* is often used.

Graphical MUDs

A **graphical MUD** is a MUD that uses computer graphics to represent parts of the virtual world and its visitors. The foremost of these is *Habitat*, written by Randy Farmer and Chip Morningstar for Lucasfilm in 1985. Graphical MUDs require players to download a special client and the game's artwork. They range from simply enhancing the user interface to simulating 3D worlds with visual spatial relationships and customized avatar appearances.

Once computer power increased and Internet connectivity became ubiquitous, the graphical MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) developed. Unlike earlier MUDs, most MMORPGs are commercial ventures. Examples of MMORPGs include *EverQuest* (1999), *Lineage* (1998), and *Ultima Online* (1997). (See list of MMORPGs for more examples and MMORPG for more on this type of game.)

Talkers and spods

A lesser known variant is the talker, typically based on ew-too, summink, sensi-summink, playground, and plenty of other code bases. The talker is essentially a MUD, with most of the complex bits of code stripped away, leaving just the communication level commands -- hence the name *talker*. People who use these tend to be called spods. The spod tends to be something of a long term fanatic. Where many mudders may move on after a year or two, people who use talkers typically have been doing so for a decade or more. Talkers are significantly easier to run than an average MUD, since they don't incorporate very much artificial intelligence, and they are usually much more user friendly, since there is not often much fighting as a focus. In other words, whole families of husbands, wives, children, and siblings have been known to spod in certain circles. They also use very little network traffic, and use simple protocols, making them ideal for setting up quietly at work. Talker applications predate MUDs by many years, although some of the early ones were used to play Dungeons & Dragons over computer networks.

The spod has earned a place in the Jargon File.

RPI MUDs

Another lesser known variant of a MUD are RPI MUDs, Role-Play Intensive Multi-User Dungeon. RPI MUDs center themselves around playing out specific roles as if the role were real. Realism is often blended in with fantasy in these types of MU*s. In general, the objective of the game is not to complete computer-generated quests or to hack-and-slash monsters in order to gain levels and equipment, but to collaborate with fellow players to create complex and multi-layered storylines in a cohesive gameworld. RPIs are very different from other MU* because of this.

The majority of RPI MUDs are levelless and classless, focusing instead on skills and crafts that players may pursue during the lifetime of their characters. RPIs also differ from MUSHes in that they retain the hard code of a MUD in deciding such variable outcomes as combat, magickal spells, and so on.

RPI MUDs could be considered giant plays where the setting or world is the theater, and the players are the actors as well as the viewers. RPIs are a newer branch of MUDs in general, but have still been around for a long period of time.

See also

- Category:MU* servers

- Category:MU* games
- online creation (OLC)
- For an academic look at MUDs, see Sherry Turkle's writings

External links

- Mud Lists (*http://www.mudlists.com*): Large selection of available online RPGs
- Mud Connector.com (*http://www.mudconnector.com*): Extensive list of available MUDs
- Top Mud Sites (*http://www.topmudsites.com*): Ranking of the best MUDs
- Some history and reviews (*http://www.iol.le/~ecarroll/mud/mr_5b*) from Richard Bartle's "Interactive Multi-User Computer Games" report
- Confessions of an Arch-Wizard (*http://www.realmsofchaos.com/confessions.php*) Mud History: Michael Lawrie's account of the early years of MUD and MIST
- Virtual(ly) Law: The Emergence of Law in LambdaMOO (*http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol2/issue1/lambda.html*)
- Intermud.org (*http://www.intermud.org*): Information about intermud communication protocols
- Mud Magic.com (*http://www.mudmagic.com*): MUD software downloads, discussion, game listings, and documentations.
- ftp.game.org: Heirarchal archive of MUD source code

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MUD"

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